

A LOOK AT THE NEIGHBORHOOD



North High School

8th and College

VIA PACIS

APRIL - MAY
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THE EARLY YEARS

By Frank Cordaro

I recently took a drive through the old neighborhood to check out the scene. The last ten years have not worn well for the Near North Side. Many of our worst fears for the neighborhood have come true. Urban erosion has taken its toll. There are many more vacant lots in the area than there was ten years ago, while abandoned houses in varying stages of deterioration await demolition. There are fewer people living in the Catholic Worker neighborhood because there is less housing for them, although the need for low income housing is steadily increasing. For the first time there are people staying at the Catholic Worker who have jobs but cannot afford housing.



On the other hand, Mr. Ruan and the downtown business community have been building and growing throughout the last ten years. Growing, I might add, with the full financial support of local, state and federal governments, welfare for the rich and powerful. Mercy Hospital has effectively ceased to be part of the neighborhood, virtually completing its takeover of the surrounding area. University Avenue has been neutralized, icing the property to the south for the continued urban sprawl. It is only a matter of time before the developers will be at the Catholic Worker doorstep.

Despite this grim situation, there has been an ongoing struggle for years to thwart the urban sprawl and preserve the integrity of the existing neighborhood. The Catholic Worker has had a role in this struggle since we appeared on the scene in August 1976.

When Joe DaVia and I first moved into the house at 713 Indiana we began offering emergency shelter to families and single women. At that time many of our guests were victims of family violence. A good number of them were referred by a coalition that was trying to start a Family Violence Center in Des Moines. Within a year the Center was established and is still in existence today.

In the summer of 1977 we bought the house next to us on Eight Street. It took us a year to rehab the house, which was in terrible shape. We called the house the Msgr. Ligutti Catholic Worker Hospitality House, after the famous Des Moines priest who served four Popes as a world wide rural advocate. The name has served us well in our efforts to bring some of the CW rural vision to the inner city. Malcolm MacKenzie, one of our first members, was instrumental in starting a number of community gardens in the area as part of his master's degree program at Drake. We also brought the garden effort closer to home by gardening the vacant lot across the

street from the two houses. We organized 15 of the Asian families in our immediate area to join our neighborhood gardening effort, and called it the Msgr. Ligutti Community Garden. We provided security by our presence and also supplied the water. It was quite a sight—Asian women in their native dress with babies on their backs bending over their garden plots.

I was the first CCI (Citizens for Community Improvement) organizer in Des Moines, and worked with them for the first couple of years we were in the neighborhood. It was through CCI that I met Rev. Bob Cook, who was also new in Des Moines and was on the board that helped hire me. Bob was associate pastor at Cottage Grove Presbyterian Church and was director of CROSS Ministries, an inner city ministry funded by the Presbyterian Church. We worked closely on many issues from then on and have remained close friends since.

I worked in our neighborhood, knocking on doors, working on the issues that concerned the people living there and building an organizational base. Abandoned houses, stop signs, and stray dogs were some of the initial issues we tackled. The first neighborhood issue that we worked on was the fight to keep the Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) in the neighborhood.



Downtown business interests wanted the campus moved to the business district to serve the needs of the downtown business community. Students and neighborhood people wanted the campus to stay in the neighborhood because its presence would ensure a continued access to higher education for low income people. This struggle brought a wide range of people from the neighborhood together for a common cause. We met and worked for the first time with local black leaders: Joanna Cheatem (may she rest in peace), Evelyn Davis, Kolongie Saqdic and Jamal Long. Many of these relationships have continued through the years. A compromise location was eventually settled upon between 7th and 8th Streets, south of University and north of the freeway.

Once we built an organization network through smaller individual issues we were able to address some of the larger systemic problems confronting the neighborhood: over-all housing shortages, rehabilitation needs and redlining. Documenting the existence of redlining helped force the banks and government agencies to make some positive gestures

toward the neighborhood groups in those early years and established us as an independent community force willing to take on anyone in our efforts to help the neighborhood.

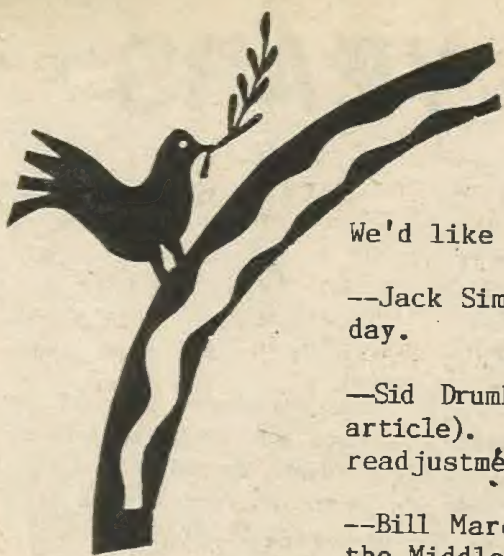
In 1978 we purchased on contract a house on Sixth Avenue to use as a Peace and Justice Center. We called the house Isaiah House and brought Jack Smith from Davenport to be its director. Jack was well qualified, a former priest who had taught at St. Ambrose College for 25 years, and one of the state's leading opponents to the Vietnam War. The high point of the center's existence was hosting the national conference of the Mobilization for Survival (MFS) in Des Moines in the fall of 1978. This was held at the Tiny Tots Day Care Center, then housed in the old Irving Junior High School building. With the conference we were able to bring to the neighborhood a national coalition of people who made the necessary connections between the military budget, the threat of nuclearism and the suffering of the poor in the USA. In time many of the people we worked with in the neighborhood began to respect and understand our on going resistance to the arms race because they saw first hand the effects of our government's misdirected priorities.

Isaiah House did not last long after the MFS conference, due to a lack of funds. In its place Bob Cook took over and eventually opened Hansen House, a hospitality house for men just getting out of prison. We moved the Peace and Justice Center to Ligutti House's first floor. From the efforts at Hansen House grew the present Criminal Justice Ministries directed by Rev. Doug Maben, and its publication BARS AND STRIPES.

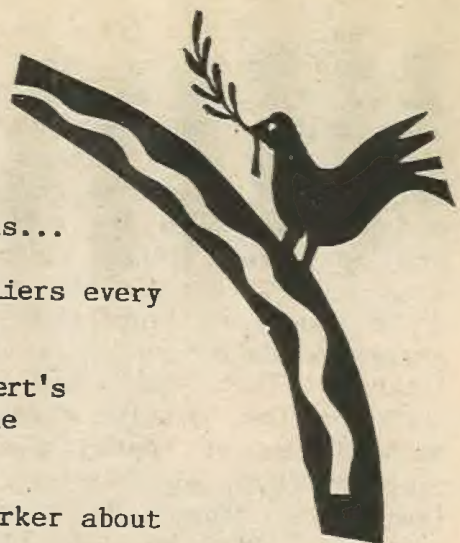
In the summer of 1980 we purchased a house four doors away from Ligutti House. The house was in such poor physical condition that we named it Lazarus House, for truly this house was dead and was brought back to life. It was our most ambitious rehabing project. Cy Engler, our friendly real estate man, said that we would have been further ahead if we levelled the place first. It took two years to rehab Lazarus House and we were well into the Reagan years by the time we started offering hospitality there.

(Cont'd on page 4)





Thank You



We'd like to thank some folks for their help in the past few months...

--Jack Simms, for doing food pick-ups at two of our regular suppliers every day.

--Sid Drumheller who gave the sermon for Mike Smith (see Ron Siewert's article). Sid also helped Mike's widow, Mara, through a lot of the readjustment.

--Bill Marchek for giving a wonderful round table series at the Worker about the Middle-East during April.

--Mike for playing the guitar at mass every Friday.

--Speed and Carson Haring, the two staff people at Hansen House, for helping with the food store on Fridays.

--Marcia Simmons for sharing (or trying to share) her graphic art ability with us.

--Doug Maben deserves three cheers for letting us use his computer and his house for typing the Des Moines mailing list and VIA PACIS. (He deserves four cheers for letting us invade his space and working around our schedules.)

--Harry and Ann, who have stayed on with us to help us with the maintenance of Corrie House and drumming up donations.

--To all the grocery stores who continue to help us out with food (we wish there was more of you).

--Wonderbread who put up with us goofing up three pick-ups while Wendy was gone (and Wendy doesn't even drive).

--Thanks to ALL of you. Please keep us in your thoughts and prayers. Drop by to see us and bring some coffee.

we can't meet the need...

This is a little different than our regular needs list.

Sure, we still are asking for all the stuff we usually ask for, such as:

- cleansers and Pine-sol
- food
- toilet paper
- disposable diapers
- baby food
- shampoo
- deodorant
- tampons and sanitary napkins
- coffee
- dish soap
- laundry soap
- plastic mattress covers for single beds
- trash bags (please hefty, hefty, hefty; not wimpy, wimpy, wimpy)

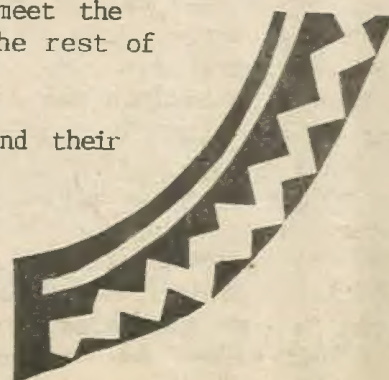
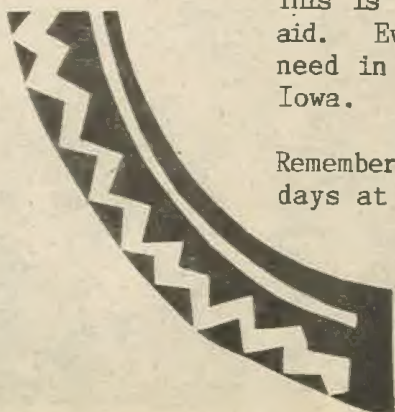
Yet no matter how flush we could be --we can't meet the need.

For the past two months, we have begged our readers (in our regular VIA PACIS and a special Iowa Mailing) to please write their state legislators for a 14 percent increase in the level of AFDC support and to fund the emergency assistance program.

We are once again asking all of you who have not written, to do so NOW! Gather any person in Iowa who breathes and cares together, and sit down and write.

This is what we REALLY need; we know that what we are doing is just a band-aid. Even with our free food store and three houses, we cannot meet the need in our neighborhood; let alone Des Moines, Polk County, or the rest of Iowa. Please give us your support.

Remember us and ALL of our brothers and sisters, whether they spend their days at the state capitol or on the streets.



Viola May

By Kari Fisher

She was a heavy set woman with cat's-eye glasses. Viola had a weakness for margarine, stray animals and stray people.

It is ironic that a history of the neighborhood must include an obituary of a woman who was so much a part of the neighborhood.

Viola May West was 58 years old when she died of a heart attack. I got the news three days after her death, April 12. Five hours later I was sitting at her memorial service.

It really struck me how much the honorings of the poor are like what the honorings of Christ must have been like.

I recognized the faces of many of our former guests. The faces of many folks from the food store were there. But "many" is different in this life style, then in the lives of the middle class and affluent. Just a small group of distraught people, trying to make some sense of death and a promise of life.



The obituary leaves much out--the story of not a saint--but of an ordinary woman with a good heart.

In the coffin, I caught a glimpse of a pale woman, with her hair neatly piled.

The Viola I knew seldom had her hair neatly piled. She'd visit the Worker sporadically and say, "Hey honey, have you got anything for me to do?"

And sooner or later there would be something--potatoes to be peeled or dishes to be washed. And sooner or later she'd be ready to leave, often puffing for a breath, and ask, "You don't happen to have any extra margarine, do you honey? I just can't eat that government commodity butter."



Whether or not there was any margarine--she'd leave reminding us that if we didn't have any room just to send folks "over to my house".

Her "house" was an always open apartment. She'd take in couples and single women and children. Sometimes it went well. Sometimes it didn't. People who had stayed their limit (some who had stayed more than their limit) at the Worker often found their way to her door. Many times they found assorted members of Viola's family there already.



Viola always had a saga with someone in her family. Like so many folks in the neighborhood, she'd use the telephone at the house.

When she was helping out she'd talk about her family and her church with "Reverend Jesse Daniels....And do you know how this-or-that hymn goes?"



But it was the little things Viola did that I'll never forget.

When my cat "Licorice" died last summer she appeared with a small box for me. A couple, former guests of the Worker who Viola had "adopted", had gone in with her to buy a guinea pig for me.



I don't think Viola's life will ever be chronicled in any history book. And she probably won't be canonized as a saint. But she was a good person with a good heart and the world needs a lot more of them. Peace, Viola.



For two whole weeks I slept with that miniature rat "Cinnamon" in my room. I'd already had my share of rodents in the Worker--a bat in my room the first night at Lazarus House (it would be a rodent if it didn't have wings) and a mouse that ran over my face another night. After two weeks of nightmares of being mauled by a life-size mouse, I finally gave it to a friend.

Viola wasn't even upset when I tried to explain that I just couldn't keep it anymore. She hadn't wanted to give me a kitty, though, for fear that it would be "too hard for you".



Last Thanksgiving Viola showed up to help. We were in the middle of not only cooking dinner, but also getting ready for the wedding of two of our guests, Chip and Joe.

So many of our celebrations here are so hap-hazard. Norman and Ron were going through their "jewelry collections" for wedding bands. I was calling florist shops for free flowers. Wendy was lining up reception food. And in the midst of the this, Viola walked in.

When Viola mentioned that her wedding dress might work, we sent Chip over to Viola's place to find out.

Two hours later, Viola sat in the "front row" of folding chairs set up in the Worker living room. When the wedding was over, Viola gave Chip the dress because "I don't need it anymore."

Step Back a Century

By Patti McKee



I chose to look at this time period because my church, Trinity United Methodist, started in 1887. I wanted to know what life was like back then.

Originally, our neighborhood was not a part of Des Moines, but rather was in the suburb of North Des Moines which was incorporated in 1880. The perimeter of North Des Moines was University Ave. on the south and the river on the east. The north and west boundaries varied according to different sources. On the north it varied from Washington St. to the river or even up to Ovid St. On the west, the boundary was either Harding Road or 21 St.

The names of some of the important streets in North Des Moines are different today than what they were then. University Ave. was called North St. Hickman Road was named Old Prospect Road. Second Ave. was Bluff St.

As we can presently see from what is left there were many fine houses in North Des Moines. The town also had many businesses, churches, schools, including a small college within its boundaries.



Businesses were varied. Marshall's Horse Radish Place fields and bottling works were on Second ave. Can you imagine waking up to the smell of horseradishes in the air? Shackelford brickyards did a booming business in the 1880's as the neighborhood grew and they began to brick the sidewalks and streets.

There were small business areas along University, Ave., Forest Ave., and College. Hoffman's Grocery was at 6th and Forest. The O.K. Barber Shop and Screwby's Grocery Store were located at 6th and College.

Around Harding Road and Hickman, coal mines tunnel under much of that area. In fact, part of the old Cassady School at 16th and Jefferson caved in when the tunnel under it collapsed.

One of the more basic businesses for that day and age was the ice house.

Ice was harvested from the Des Moines River. The process of harvesting the ice began with scraping the snow, if any, off of the ice then sawing it into chunks by hand of with a horse drawn saw. The chunks of ice were then pulled up by hand and pushed on the ice with long poles to the conveyor belt. The belt then transported them into the ice house where they were stacked then packed in straw.

North Des Moines had a variety of churches, Westminster Presbyterian on 21st St., North Park Congregational on 8th and University, Bethel Evangelical, and Trinity United Methodist at 8th and College. Trinity will be celebrating its 100th anniversary this fall.

By the end of the 1880's North Des Moines had several schools. One of the first was the Forest Home School located on Forest Ave. between 13th and 14th St. The site is now used for a bus garage by the Des Moines Public Schools. It was a four room building which included primary, intermediate and high school grade levels. Summit, Oakland, and Lake Park Schools were built in the 1880's. North High School opened in 1889. Its original site was at 8th and College where Moulton Elementary School now stands. Part of the original North High building is still used.

Des Moines College was located at 9th and Washington. It was a liberal arts college with good music and history departments. It later merged with Highland Park College to form Des Moines University, which was located at 2nd and Euclid where a shopping center is today. The buildings at 9th and Washington were later used for Dowling High School.

That concludes the survey of the neighborhood. Now for a few insights into the everyday life of people at the turn of the century.

Boys seeking to earn some money could have a cow route or a gas-light route. On the cow route each morning the boys would go and pick up the cows at the individual houses and herd them up to White's Hill to pasture during the day. White's Hill was located just a little south of where Broadlawns is located now. Then about 5:30 in the evening the boys would bring the cows back to their appropriate barns. On the gas lights routes, the boys would light the gas street lights each night. On Saturday they cleaned the glass globes and replaced the wicks.



West High High School

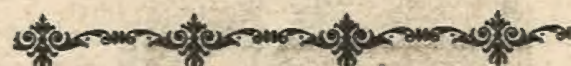
City transportation was provided by horse drawn streetcars. One ran up 9th St. and turned around at Hickman Road. To mail a letter one would go to a streetcar intersection and the streetcar would stop long enough for you to drop the letter in the mailbox on the back end of the streetcar. A postman would collect the mail from the streetcars at 6th and Mulberry and take them to the post office.

The city started paving streets in 1882, but it was a slow process so most streets were still mud or dirt. Most of the sidewalks were wooden, but 8th St. did have a brick sidewalk. Remnants of it still exist.

Crocker Woods Park was on the northern edge of North Des Moines along the south side of the river. It had a circular dance hall and other amusements. These were all washed away by the big flood in 1903 and were never rebuilt.

The flood in 1903 also washed out houses along Second Ave. Many people moved from there to Forty Acres which was located between University and Forest Aves. and west of Second Ave.

As we can see life at the turn of the century was different than today, but buildings still exist to remind us of that time. And so do people, I would like to thank Genevive Morris for her memories of that time period. Other information for my article came from a booklet on the history of Trinity Methodist Church and from the Iowa Historical Society.



THE EARLY YEARS (Cont'd)

The homeless population was booming. Our organizing efforts in the neighborhood were in a decline, yet our presence continued to grow. The mere fact of our rehabing two houses that were well on their way to becoming vacant lots was signs of hope and commitment to the neighborhood. However our most important contribution to the neighborhood was just being there for people who needed us. We have offered shelter to thousands of folks through the years, many of them from our neighborhood. Neighborhood people have been coming to the Catholic Worker for food ever since we started and most times we have had something to offer them. We've developed countless personal bonds with people in the neighborhood, many of whom would call us friends.

The neighborhood has claimed a kind of ownership of the Catholic Workers. Many people see themselves as part of the effort. I can remember once having more bread than we could handle at the house and setting up a free bread table on 6th Avenue in front of Isaiah House. It wasn't too long before one of the guys on the street came through the door with an arm full of bread saying, "Hey, they are giving this bread away and I know you people are always begging for food."

That's kind of the way it's been. We've never given anything that hasn't come back to us with a generous heart.

During the four months I spent sleeping out in Des Moines I learned about some resources available to poor people. I ate one meal a day, that was at the soup line run by the Door of Faith; this was supplemented by sweet rolls given out at the soup line and at the Catholic Worker food store.

It is sort of odd that we homeless people are not eligible for food stamps because we do not have an address or a place to cook. But other counties in Iowa do not require those standards to be eligible for food stamps as long as you can prove residency. Also, there are people living all over Des Moines without cooking facilities, but receiving food stamps. There are many prepared or cooked items that you are allowed to purchase on food stamps. Meats, cheeses, breads, sweets, ice cream, pop, gum, candy bars, pre-cooked canned foods—examples: pork and beans, spam, spaghetti-o's, ravioli, etc., fruits and juices, all healthy and needed supplements to a person's diet, things most people take for granted but things you never see in a soup line.



I remember one time that H.K. and I went to the soupline at the Door of Faith and there was a notice on the door stating that the next day there would be no soup line as they would have a picnic at Nollen Plaza. The following day we went to the park and discovered that the picnic was being put on by Banker's Life at noon and everyone was welcome.

Can you see 30 or 40 homeless men and women standing in line with all the people from businesses and insurance companies in the downtown area? People would look right through us and police would frown at us. By the way, the lines to the free food were a block or more long so H.K. and I got one plain hotdog, one tablespoon serving of pork and beans, a bag of potato chips, and a small cup of Coke. That was to last us until the next day at 10:50 AM when the soup line was open again. I knew of the Kindred Community House where meals were served because I had lived here before, but in four months, no one on the street told me of it. Something badly needed here is a directory of resources for the homeless, a pamphlet that could be taken out by homeless people or former homeless people and given to people sleeping out, and there will be people sleeping out again this summer no matter what city hall may say!

HOMELESS

I am talking of people sleeping under bridges, along the rivers and lakes, in or near the railroad yards and in abandoned houses, but there will be others sleeping in cars or vans, some running, some not, staying with friends in overcrowded rooms, and apartments. Not all the homeless are men, the stereotype tramp or hobo, but families with children.



There are many agencies, churches and groups offering many types of assistance but not one real referral service, although there are a few such in "name only". I say in "name only" for they screen and decide who should be helped—whereas I feel anyone asking for help should be referred to the proper agency or group and let the people running these services decide what they can do. Probably the only way the homeless receive a fighting chance is to print up and distribute a directory of such services like I mentioned earlier in this article.

I did find and receive help from various sources during my period of sleeping out: First Call for Help, The Salvation Army, The Catholic Worker, The Kindred Community, also the soup line and free clothing room at the Door of Faith. The Bethel Mission also has a free clothing room, but from my experiences with it in the past, I never went there.

Because of the vicious cycle, no job, no home; no home, no job, a person has to look to other means of earning pocket money. The Blood Bank is one option and recycling cans for the deposit is another. We call this way of earning money, "trashing". We pick up cans on the street, in parking lots and also by digging in dumpsters, going through other people's trash. In so doing I have found good radios, typewriters, watches, tools, electric clocks, telephones, stereos, speakers, bicycles and money. I found several outlets for this merchandise. The cans and bottles with IOWA deposit on them are a nickel and flattened Iowa cans are worth three cents. I always took mine to the Des Moines Recycling Center on 600 E. Des Moines St. A few times during my walking of my route looking for cans I came across part-time work.

IN DES MOINES

BY RON SIEWERT

I averaged 80 to 120 blocks a day. I went out early in the morning and again at about 6 in the evening. Some guys walked all night looking for redeemable cans.

Right now as I write this I can look around my room and see almost all the furnishings have been recycled including a telephone, fan, typewriter, electric alarm clock, tools, stereo with two speakers, a couple of radios (portable), T.V. (2) one with an excellent picture and no sound and one with good sound but no picture, so I use them together.

Since my last article on Homelessness I have been invited to join the community at the Catholic Worker, so, I have joined and have found a family, all beautiful people working toward a common goal.



WELCOME TO RON

We'd like to welcome Ron Siewert into our community. Last issue, Ron had an article in Via Pacis (although his name is a little different because we accidentally left off his last name—his REAL name is Ron Clay Siewert). Although getting names right may not be our forte, we are glad that Ron is here. He adds a whole lot to our community. He's been working at the food store (a lot of the time single-handedly) since January. Besides adding a good dose of common-street-sense and energy to our community, he also brings a lot of love. Welcome!



WELFARE REFORM

By Jim Harrington

As the 1988 presidential campaign gains momentum, power holders and seekers from all strata of government are hawking what they view as new ideas and fresh starts toward a better America. "Welfare reform" is one of the targets to evolve again and nearly everyone, from the president to welfare recipients themselves, agree that the subject needs to be addressed. But there are two conflicting views as to which direction this reform should take.

The major premise of one group is that welfare provides a disincentive for people to work. They fear that a sizeable dependent population is being created by a withdrawal of the working poor from the labor force. They further contend that unmarried women deliberately become pregnant to qualify for welfare benefits and that once qualified an unmarried mother need only become pregnant again in order to increase her income.

"Reform" from this perspective then, is to change "welfare" to "workfare". As one presidential aspirant, Pierre Dupont from New Jersey, recently summed it up: "No work, no pay." Others wouldn't go quite that far but would substantially raise eligibility requirements and reduce benefits to make welfare programs less available.

Several weeks ago, the General Accounting Office, a prestigious investigative arm of Congress, completed studies which disproved once again the assumptions of this group of would-be reformers. The G.A.O. concluded that the availability of welfare does not reduce the incentive of poor people to work and does not have impact on the child-bearing rates of unmarried women, including young unmarried mothers.

But false assumptions and myths do not die easily. They hardly even fade away for very long. In the 1950's proponents of these myths attempted to use them to cut costs of the Cook County (Chicago) Illinois Dept. of Public Aid. A study of the ADC program there by Greenleigh Associates, titled "ADC facts and Fallacies" dispelled these myths and the proposed cuts were not made.

In the early 1960's these same myths resurfaced along with the added myth that southern blacks were flooding to New York and other northern cities to cash in on welfare benefits. Once again these myths were disproven by a study conducted under the Moreland Act Commission in New York state. Once again it was proven that poor people did not shun jobs, unmarried women did not get pregnant, and southern blacks did not move to New York all simply to get welfare. Blacks were then

leaving the rural South, where they had been displaced from field work by advanced farm machinery, with the hope of finding jobs in the factories of the industrial north. It has been impossible to resurrect that particular myth since the tide of migration now has been reversed from north to south. As industry has moved south seeking cheaper costs, displaced workers, both black and white, have also headed south. They are seeking jobs, not welfare.



Meantime amid the myths, there are some hard facts which face Iowans and every state in the Union. Twenty-five percent of all 4 and 5-year-old children in the nation are growing up in poverty. In the past six years an average of 1.7 million new jobs were created annually at an average pay rate of less than \$7 per hour. In the previous four years jobs were created at a rate of 2.6 million annually with an average pay of \$11.70 per hour. Last year all of the numerical increase in jobs was in the service area. Most were in the fast food, janitorial, or related fields where pay is near the minimum wage with no fringe benefits. According to economist Allen Sinai, there are now many people trying to hold two jobs or families of two or three members working just to generate the same income that one factory job used to provide.

Minimum wage now has a purchasing power of about 40% less than it had 8 years ago when it was raised. In Iowa the purchasing power of an AFDC grant has diminished about the same amount in the same time period. People caught in this situation have moved downward from poverty to destitution.



In recent years the number of people living in poverty has risen by 8 million and with this has come a corresponding increase in such related problems as homelessness, hunger, neglect, and abuse.

That poor people do not rush to take advantage of welfare programs can best be illustrated by the fact that fewer than 6 out of 20 people eligible for food stamps actually receive them. In some areas of the country fewer than 1 out of 3 eligible people actually participate. The causes for this vary but include such reasons as the stigma attached, the complicated process of establishing and maintaining eligibility and the deterrent manner in which the program is administered in some localities.

Those advocating welfare reform in an opposite direction begin with the premise that programs should provide a floor below which disadvantaged people should not fall. They believe the floor should be maintained at a level of decency that would enable recipients to have their common human needs for food, clothing, education, health care and shelter met in a manner that preserves their God given dignity. Income maintenance for survival needs should be only a beginning. Adjunct support services, for those needing them to be available. These should include training, education, vocational rehabilitation, medical care and counselling. The purpose would be to enable recipients to develop their capacities and reach for the financial and social independence and personal achievement they could aspire to if relieved of the burden of devoting all their energies to the day to day struggle for survival.

From the perspective of this group then, "reform" would involve first giving grants to recipients that would enable them to at least survive at an acceptable level of decency. This would require a substantial increase in grants in Iowa and elsewhere. For those who are physically and mentally disabled, health and rehabilitation services should be provided to improve their functioning and prevent further deterioration. For those unemployed or underemployed, programs of training, education (including college) and counselling should be provided along with work incentive provisions that would let people see some return for their efforts by experiencing an improvement in their economic well being.

Antagonists of this approach hold that this has already been tried and has failed. This is patently untrue. First of all these programs have never been adequately funded and grants have never been adequate to allow recipients to meet their basic needs. Grants have consistently ranged from 50% to 75% of what program planners and directors determine to be minimum standards of human need. Thus society has subtly communicated to welfare recipients the unspoken message, "You are only half, or three-fourths human." This is hardly conducive to enhancing the feelings of self worth of poor people.

Second, some experiments in support programs such as the Work Incentive Program, did indeed produce very positive results for many AFDC parents when it was initiated 15 years ago. Unemployed people were helped through training programs, including four years of college, thus enabling them to secure decent jobs with decent incomes and be subsequently phased out of the welfare system.

This success however brought repercussions from some businesses who pointed out that welfare recipients were achieving more than the working poor those businesses had in their employ, at the minimum wage. Rather than trying to upgrade conditions for the working poor, our political leaders gutted the W.I.N. program and eliminated virtually all training programs for meaningful jobs. Rather than having work incentives we now have disincentives. Recently we encountered an AFDC mother trying to get off welfare. She secured a student loan to attend Junior College. However that loan was counted as income and the mother had her welfare benefits reduced.



There is failure all right but that failure is in the operation of the system and the society that funds it in a half hearted manner. If the transportation department needed one million dollars to bridge a river and our legislature appropriated half that amount, the architects and engineers would have two choices.

They could either build a sound bridge halfway across or a flimsy one, destined to collapse, all the way across. In either event, society would not tolerate such half way measures. Neither should it tolerate such half hearted considerations in the upcoming discussions on "Welfare Reform."

And there will indeed be such flim flam including from Iowa's Governor, Terry Branstad. At the present time Iowa has a very minimal work incentive for AFDC parents. Funding is so short that it operates in only 50 of Iowa's 99 counties. As things stand, it is expected that Federal participation in the W.I.N. program will be further reduced next year. While the Governor recommended zero increase in grants to AFDC families in his budget, to his credit he did ask for additional state funds for the W.I.N. program to make up for the anticipated loss of federal revenues for that purpose.

Now, however, the Governor intends to spread that same total amount, which is woefully inadequate to support the program in 50 counties, to an expansion of the program into all 99 counties. This is the cornerstone of his revision of a "workfare" program. Sheer flim flam. Such measures will limit W.I.N. training to little more than training AFDC parents to fill out a job application for any old job. It will do nothing to secure the kind of training needed to qualify for a decent job with a decent wage. Poor people will continue to be pushed into doing society's "dirty work" for little or nothing. There are indeed some jobs that ought never to be filled under the conditions laid down by some employers. Let me illustrate with the experience of one of our guests.

Last summer, a neighborhood slumlord found it necessary to reroof a big old house he had bought and cut up into apartments. He could not keep tenants, however, because every time it rained their clothing and furniture would get soaked. This neglect had continued for so long that not only the shingles but wood sheathing beneath had to be replaced.

At the same time there was a young man who, with his wife and child, lived as a guest at the Worker House. He had been employed briefly in the oil fields in Texas but was laid off and was trying to make his way to Minneapolis to find work. In Des Moines they ran out of money and he was trying to find some kind of work so they could complete their journey.

This man was hired to repair the slumlord's roof and not for the minimum wage of \$3.45/hour but for \$3/hour. This was hard, dangerous work but the man took the job in desperation. He was paid in cash of course. On his third day of work he made a mistake cutting a piece of plywood sheathing. His employer charged him for this material which was the equivalent of 2 hours of pay. As desperate for money as this man was, he quit the job in anger and disgust.

There are presumably laws to protect workers against this kind of exploitation but they are meaningless to desperate people in desperate situations. The man and his family were gone after several days and Lord knows how many more times they are likely to repeat that kind of experience.

Last fall the National Conference of Bishops issued its pastoral letter "Economic Justice for All". In this document the bishops confronted such persistent social problems as high structural unemployment, underemployment, growing inequity in income distribution, the farm crisis, the dissipation of national resources on military spending and the open warfare being waged against worker rights. It also endorsed an adequate program of income maintenance for the growing numbers of people unable to have their needs met through the market place. The document would provide guidance for thinking, caring people for years to come.

But for the poor and destitute, problems of structural unemployment, dissipation of national resources, soaring national debt, foreign trade deficits and the consumer binge of the 1980's are all abstract terms. They need food and shelter today. They need help and training now to equip themselves to secure a meaningful job at a decent wage tomorrow.

It is not a matter of money that keeps us from responding to their plight. Our mean average personal income per person in this country approximates \$15,000.

A diversion of 1 1/2 percent of our gross national product would eliminate poverty and most of its accompanying ills. A 10 percent diversion of our war related expenditures would do the same. Recently, it was reported that the average businessman, in a travel status, receives a per diem of \$200 for lodging, 3 meals and local transportation. That is \$200 for expenses (not salaries) each day.

When you see a poor family trying to survive a full month on an income that is not much more than \$200, it puts flesh into the Bishops' concern with the problem of growing inequity in income distribution.

The problem indeed is not a lack of national income but one of attitudes, myths, values and will. "Welfare Reform" will be debated at length in coming weeks and the outcome will determine for many years whether this nation treats our poor with compassion or indifference; as brothers and sisters in Christ, or as outcasts. Caring people must pay attention to this issue now and let our political leaders know they care; if the pastoral letter "Economic Justice For All" is to take on real meaning.

EPIPHANY PLOWSHARES

By Wendy Bobbitt

On March 31 the Epiphany Plowshares went on trial in Philadelphia for their act of nuclear disarmament at Willow Grove Naval Air Force Base in Willow Grove, PA. The four defendants, Lin Romano, Fr. Thomas McGann, Fr. Dexter Lancot and Greg Boertje, were charged with destruction of government property, conspiracy, and trespass, charges carrying a total of 16 years.

The prosecutor began the trial by informing the jury that the case was a very straightforward one since the defendants freely admitted to having done damage to government owned helicopters and a P-3 Orion plane as charged. The judge as well clearly wanted to restrict the case to those facts and repeatedly instructed the jury that they were not to consider any other elements such as the defendants' character or motivation, International Law, Nuremberg principles, God's Law, the war crimes of our government, the legality of Reagan's policies in Central America or anything else; the issue was to remain whether or not they had damaged US property.

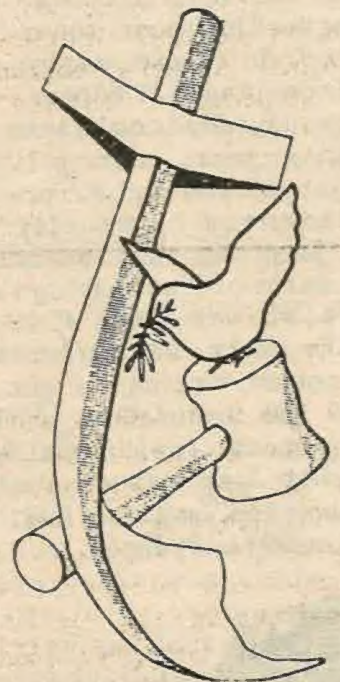
Despite the fact that Judge Broderick refused to permit expert witnesses to testify on such questions as International law, the illegal activities of the CIA, current US policy in Central America, or US nuclear war preparations; despite the fact that he cut off any mention of the missions being flown from Willow Grove to Central America or of the fact that the helicopters and planes are designed for attack, nonetheless enough references to those issues got through before they were cut off to cause a doubt in the minds of at least some of the jurors. After deliberating for two days the jury was deadlocked and Judge Broderick declared a mistrial.

The case will be retried on May 11 and the Epiphany Plowshares are likely to be convicted. Still the trial was a major victory for the Plowshares movement and a sign of hope that the people of America are not willing to tolerate what the government is doing. Every previous Plowshares trial ended in a conviction; the longest any judge had deliberated before this one was six hours. In this trial, long descriptive statements by Lin Romano and Fr. McGann about the suffering of the poor and its relationship to the arms race (permitted in their statements of motivation) had members of the courtroom audience in tears. The courtroom was packed throughout the week-long trial with parishioners of the now-suspended priests, fellow priests of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia and many other supporters. The PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER ran two stories on the front page—one on the trial and one on the P-3 Orion which carries nuclear depth charges and whose mission is to track Soviet submarines off the coast of Iceland.

As Lin said in her statement, if the faces of the dying in Central America were those of people we know, we would never tolerate the indiscriminate killing. We would do a lot more than shake our heads as Congress approves more funding for the contras, as we militarize Honduras and make "preparations" for the war we are already waging. A Nicaraguan leader recently said that although Americans do not explicitly value American lives over the lives of other people, in fact we do because no one will do anything about the war as long as Americans are not getting killed in it. In this trial, the judge by refusing to allow any discussion of International law or Nuremberg or of whether

the defendants were thereby acting lawfully made clear the court's role as apologist for the government, as an agent of repression. At the Chancery the police were called at peaceful silent vigils and young children of demonstrators were not allowed to play on the porch in shelter during a rainstorm, were not even allowed inside to use the bathroom! I was thinking of how the toy section at Target looks like a munitions factory, the cartoons look like battle practice and how we have JROTC in all the schools. My mother told me this visit, that my brother's Boy Scout troop spends its yearly field trip on military bases every year because the cost is so much cheaper than anywhere else that they don't even consider other options, although as she said, it's obvious why the military is doing it. The judge was right that there is a conspiracy: it is a conspiracy on the part of all our institutions to convince us that politics are real, war is peace, death is life.

In these insane times, as we plunge toward nuclear disaster, let us thank God that there are those who break through it all and have the courage to act for life. May there be more.



paupers plowshares

As we were putting the final touches on this issue of Via Pacis we received word of yet another Plowshares action which took place in Philadelphia on Good Friday.

Fr. Pat Sieber and his brother Rick Sieber, both of St. Francis Inn soup kitchen and shelter in Philadelphia, entered the Warminster US Naval Air Development Center near Philadelphia. With them they carried a three-foot cross and a coffin containing the names of 65 homeless people buried in the paupers field in Philadelphia. After burying the coffin and erecting the cross over it, the Siebers hung a banner reading "GOD HEARS THE CRY OF THE POOR", hammered on the exterior of the P-3 Orion, and poured blood.

This action with its explicit connection of militarism and the suffering of the poor and homeless in America complements Epiphany Plowshares with its emphasis on US war crimes and the murder of the poor in Central America.

The Siebers are free on personal recognizance and are awaiting their hearing before the Grand Jury. The charges at present are unlawful entry and destruction of government property. The Siebers can be contacted at St. Francis Inn, P.O. Box 3746, Philadelphia, PA 19125.



Entrance Song Canto de entrada

You are the God of the poor
the humane and simple God
the God who sweats in the street
the God with a sunburnt face.
Therefore I talk to you
like I talk to my people
because you are a God who labors
Christ the worker.
You go with the hand of my people
struggle in the fields and the town
stand in line in the campground
to get your dally pay
you eat sitting there in the park
with Eusebio, Pancho and Juan Jose
and you complain about the syrup
when they don't put much honey in it.

nuclear resistance

Fences hopped, blood poured, gates blocked, leaflets passed out. Great Peace Marchers crossing white lines across the country. Gandhi's and King's birthdays celebrated with civil disobedience. Activists rocked by nuke blast in attempt to halt test at the Nevada test site. Chernobyl accident recharges nuclear power opponents. Remembering Three Mile Island, a persistent graffitist is jailed for one year. Hammers disarm two more Missouri missile silos, forging swords into plowshares.

More than 160 actions, over 3,200 arrests, at least 65 people serving sentences from a month up to 18 years in the United States and Canada. But the dry statistics are only an outline. The content of anti-nuclear civil disobedience in 1986 overflows with the living energy of thousands. Creative, diverse, filled with hope.

The practice of civil disobedience remains widespread, and the number of activists imprisoned for significant terms has not diminished. In fact, many new people are involved with this movement, while many veteran nuclear resisters have been among those arrested opposing U.S. intervention in Central America (an estimated 4,500 arrests nationwide in 1986), seeking divestment in South Africa (an estimated 2,500 arrests in 1986) and for other causes.

HEARTLAND HOPE FESTIVAL: A MIDWEST PEACE CELEBRATION

August 7, 8 and 9 in Omaha, Nebraska there will be a three day peace celebration of midwesterners. The festival will include visual and performing artists, workshops on current issues and midwestern networking, leafletting and vigiling at the Strategic Air Command (SAC) and nonviolent civil disobedience. For more information, please contact Tom Cordaro at 3104 Seward, Omaha, NE, 68111 or (402)422-0592.

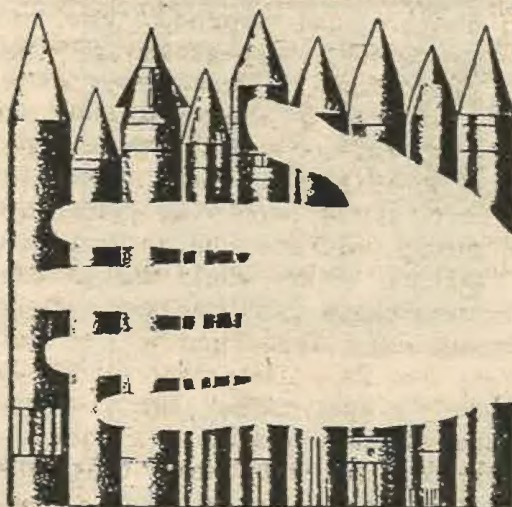
In response to the unilateral Soviet moratorium on nuclear weapons testing, the largest, most visible resistance was at the Nevada nuclear test site. For the fifth straight year the Nevada Desert Experience, a Franciscan group, brought religious activists to pray and resist at the site on three separate occasions. Their efforts in 1986 were complemented by the American Peace Test, a national group of disaffected Freeze direct action proponents that organized a series of legal demonstrations and resistance actions as part of the larger movement for adoption of a comprehensive test ban treaty.

On at least 20 different occasions in 1986, over 640 arrests were made at the gate to the test site or in the back country. Dozens of back-country activists braved the elements and risked personal injury in attempts to prevent several weapons tests by their presence at or near "ground zero".

In the largest single action of 1986, 244 people were arrested on July 6, as the Heartland Peace Pilgrimage was joined by the Great Peace March for Global Disarmament at the headquarters of the Strategic Air Command (SAC). Most were released with ban and bar letters following the action at Offut Air Force Base (AFB), near Omaha, NE.

Both the Nevada test site and SAC were sites of anti-nuclear civil disobedience in the late 1950's.

This year's longest prison sentences were given to the five Silo Plowshares activists. They are now serving seven and eight year terms in federal prison for hammering and pouring blood on two different Minuteman missile silos in Missouri on Good Friday, March 28, 1986.



One of the five, Jean Gump, a mother of 12 and grandmother, summed up her approach to the Plowshares action: "These weapons are made by human hands. They can make more weapons, but not in my name."

Also in the midwest, two more "Faith and Resistance" retreats were organized, one in Missouri and the other in Michigan. Both concluded with mass civil disobedience actions at Whitman AFB in Missouri (78 arrests) and Wurtsmith AFB in Michigan (96 arrests). The Faith and Resistance model of several days of retreat concluding with a mass action has proven very effective in awakening people of religious faith to the necessity of nonviolent resistance. Plans are underway for more such retreats at other locations in 1987.

At Michigan's Wurtsmith AFB, as well as Air Force bases in California and Hawaii, first amendment rights have been under attack in federal court. Four Michigan women served sentences of three to seven months as a result of their persistent leafletting at a place local authorities assured them is not under military jurisdiction.

While religious based resistance is increasing, strides have also been made to involve more youth in direct action by the Honeywell project in Minneapolis, by cruise missile testing opponents in Canada, and by the No Business as Usual action network, a national anti-war group currently focused on resistance to Star Wars.

Another highlight of 1986 was the revival of civil disobedience in opposition to the Seabrook, New Hampshire nuclear power plant. Beginning in the late spring and continuing through the fall, over 250 arrests were made during nearly a dozen actions at the plant, now loaded with nuclear fuel and awaiting final approval to begin operation. The resurgence of a resistance campaign which began over 10 years ago contributed to the public pressure resulting in the Governor of Massachusetts and many local New Hampshire officials refusing to cooperate with the Seabrook emergency response plan.



Through 1987 and beyond, U.S. nuclear weapons testing will continue to be a focus for protest and resistance. Like many of their counterparts across the country, Nevada organizers are sustained by their recognition that securing a nuclear free future demands not only public education, legislative and electoral work, and legal protest, but also principled, nonviolent direct action which risks arrest and imprisonment.

Sustained resistance, coordinated with other efforts, could serve to make the test ban a significant issue in the next two years leading up to the 1988 elections.

Also worth watching in 1987 is the Coalition to Stop Trident's Campaign to Stop the D-5 missile, virtually unopposed in public debate and due for deployment in 1989. In Florida, resisters confronted the D-5 test flights as they began this January. Major civil disobedience actions are planned for the fall of 1987 and again prior to the 1988 elections.

The H-bomb truck watch, a campaign initiated by Nukewatch of Madison, Wisconsin, has been adopted by the Mobilization for Survival. In the tradition of the nuclear train campaign and Britain's Cruisewatch network, this citizen initiative monitors and increases awareness of nuclear weapons transport through our communities. As this effort expands, civil disobedience actions opposing this traffic are expected.

Civil disobedience, divine obedience, nonviolent direct action. Nuremberg action, free speech exercises, civil resistance--whatever the particular label, the fact remains that this is a significant aspect of the movement for a nuclear free future. And as the number of arrests, the number of people in prison, and the steadfastness of the grassroots indicates, it is too large to be ignored.

Jack and Felice Cohen-Joppa are the co-editors of the Nuclear Resister (P.O. Box 43383, Tucson, AZ, 85733). The Nuclear Resister is a comprehensive chronicle of anti-nuclear civil disobedience in the United States and Canada. Each issue lists the prison addresses of activists currently behind bars. \$15/10 issues. Free sample on request.

Caring or Careless

By Ron Siewert

A few weeks ago, a former guest of the Catholic Worker House died. He committed suicide at the Polk County Jail after being arrested for drunk driving. Taken to the hospital, he died a day later. The night he died I was thinking about him and how little I knew of him and how uninterested I was in finding out about him. It made me ashamed to realize that I never tried to understand how or why he was at the Worker. This little verse that follows, ran through my mind until I finally put it on paper and it taught me that we only go round once in life and one better make the best of it.

Life is like a flower,
so beautiful--
Yet so fragile,
one careless step, and
it's gone forever.

LETTERS



(The following are letters to the DES MOINES REGISTER written by two Catholic Workers—John Rutt and Jim Harrington. We are opting to reprint them in VIA PACIS in their entirety, since the REGISTER did not.)

Regarding your April 2 article on code violations at the Kindred Community house for homeless people, it is apparent the Des Moines City Council has successfully dodged the real issue involved in this dispute.

No one, and certainly not members of the Kindred Community, wants homeless people to live in hazardous conditions. It is for this very reason the Kindred opened their doors to those who otherwise would be staying in cold, abandoned buildings, parked cars or worse.

This is why the crowded conditions developed at their houses. Most of their guests do not have the money to pay from \$4 to \$8 per day per person to stay at an established shelter. The Kindred Community is the only resource that will accept single men without charging them.

The real issue is that most homeless people rarely have any money.

Early is this conflict the city, in concert with the Polk County Department of Social Services, proposed a solution. They asked that the Kindred Community refer their guests to Polk County social services who would then issue vouchers so those residents could stay at one of the established, fee charging shelters. On the surface, this seemed to be an appropriate solution, except for one major fact not widely known. Social services will assist an individual only one time in a 12 month period and that help will not be extended beyond a 30 day limit.

Being aware of that policy limitation, and knowing most of their guests were without income, unemployed and often unemployable, the Kindred Community responded to the city's proposal with several essential questions.

What would happen after 30 days? Would the county change its policy and continue to support them or would these men be out on the streets once again or at the doors of Kindred? If the county would provide extended help, on the basis of need, to those displaced by the city, would it also provide such help to others in need who would be coming to Kindred or going without shelter because they were without money to go to a mission?

These are proper questions to which the city of Des Moines must have answers if it is to bank on Polk county social services as the resource to provide for those it displaces from Kindred with the assurance, "We will not put people on the streets."

But in fact, the Des Moines City Council has neglected to respond to these questions and to cover its neglect has intensified criticism of the Kindred Community's efforts to be helpful to our neediest citizens. They now report that Kindred violates sections of the code because "the basements are used for storage and laundry." The houses have "insufficient water pressure."

If the city council is sincerely concerned about the plight of the homeless, it will get together with Polk county social services and see to it that humane policies are adopted so that homeless people are granted the necessary assistance to establish their own homes or some other suitable accommodation. And not for 30 days a year but for as long as necessary.

James Harrington

Friends,

Well! I don't know about y'all, but I intend to, at my earliest convenience, 1. take up pistol/rifle/shotgun lessons; 2. jiu jitsu/karate/self-defense lessons; and 3. take Russian language lessons so I can understand what them damn Russky KGB agents and Soviet generals are saying to each other!

All funnin' aside, I truly am appalled at the potential for damage to improved Soviet/American relations, nuclear disarmament, and in general social justice issues!

Let's keep in mind what Nikita Khrushchev said, that Russia wouldn't have to physically invade America; America would collapse from internal moral decay, and then Russia could, so-to-speak, waltz in and pick up the pieces.

Also, remember the ideas of the Founding Fathers of our country, on the rights and responsibilities of the enfranchised citizens/voters.

As ever,

JR Rutt

FRANK AND ERNEST

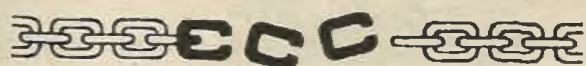


RESISTING APARTHEID

By Kari Fisher

"It's no good to say that black and white people should be able to live together as equals and at peace with one another. Why are we saying this if we cannot put this into practice NOW?"

--Laurie Nathan, former National Organizer of the South African End Conscription Campaign



Since last June's South African "state of emergency" news from the land of apartheid has been scarce. However, even before that, news of nonviolence in action was scarce and white resistance in the country we're led to believe just didn't happen.

Yet in 1983, a coalition of nonviolent groups banded together to give white South Africans an outlet for ending apartheid. The End Conscription Campaign (ECC) was formed by religious, human rights and women's organizations to oppose apartheid by ending the system of compulsory military service in South Africa.

Laurie Nathan, a founder of ECC, has just completed a six-week tour of the states sponsored nationally by the War Resisters League. He spoke in four Iowa cities--Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Ames and Grinnell. Nathan spoke of the role the military has taken in the enforcement of apartheid.

"Under South African law, all white men and ONLY white men have to serve a total of four years in the South African army," he said. "Before 1984, the army was primarily playing a role in Namibia and in Southern Angola. But since then, the army has been extensively within the country with the express purpose of crushing black resistance. Under the current state of emergency, young white men are going into townships and attempting to break the back of consumer boycotts, school boycotts, strikes, a whole variety of other nonviolent resistance activities."

Yet, because of the role the army plays, Nathan says that they have been able to mobilize "thousands of white people against conscription."

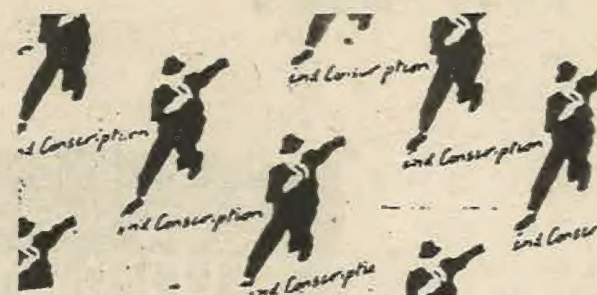
The ECC is a "high-profile campaigning organization" whose activities range from planting flowers to building sand castles to organizing mass marches and demonstrations to attending funerals. Supporters include Archbishop Desmond Tutu and Rev. Alan Boesak. But, not everything is coming up roses for ECC.

Sixty ECC activists have been detained during the current state of emergency. ECC organizers have had their cars tampered with and their homes fire-bombed. Nathan is always quick to add that white resisters and organizations fare considerably better than black ones.



"As a white person who has been in hiding for six months what I have to fear if I'm caught is detention," he said. He added, "Increasingly, what black activists have to fear, if they are caught, is being shot and killed on the spot."

Nathan continued the contrast, "Although it has happened; it's virtually certain that as a white activist, I wouldn't be physically assaulted. A black activist in detention is virtually guaranteed to be physically assaulted."



Nathan didn't deny the inevitability of blood-shed; in fact, he said that anyone who walked into a black township would know that a civil war was already happening.

"In this context of intensifying resistance and repression, increasingly we look to the international community for support; for solidarity; and to increase the pressure on the Reagan administration and the South African government," conveyed Nathan. He also said that American activists were to be commended for their work on apartheid issues; but urged them to address racism that was found in their own country, most notably racism in the form of economic segregation.

Nathan concluded, "While we have no illusions that international pressure in itself will bring about an end to apartheid. The people of South Africa will liberate themselves."



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GOD OF LIFE AND PEACE, we give thanks that on Pentecost you created a new community reconciled across all lines of division and enmity. We confess today our infidelity to the example and teachings of your son, Jesus.

We have placed our hope for security in technology of our own design. Forgive us our idolatry, Lord.

We have not loved our enemies as Jesus taught us. Forgive us our faithlessness, Lord.

We confess our silent complicity as our nation's leaders hold out the false promise of Star Wars weaponry instead of Jesus' way of peace and reconciliation. Forgive us our silence, Lord.

O God, we pray for your grace upon the leaders and people of our country and of the Soviet Union, that we might see the humanity in one another and come to know that truly "in Christ there is no east or west." On this Pentecost Sunday, we pray for an outpouring of your Holy Spirit in our hearts, in our churches, and on our nation, so that we would turn away from false security in false gods and truly know the things that make for peace.

Give us the courage, O Lord, to speak the truth about Star Wars and to seek peace with those who are now considered our enemies. Renew our commitment to be your peacemakers and to follow the way of your son, Jesus. Amen.



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